

An ordinance, relative to the capture and condemnation of prizes.

AN ORDINANCE, Relative to the Capture and Condemnation of Prizes.

THE United States in Congress assembled, taking into consideration the implacable war waged against them by the king of Great Britain, and judging it inconsistent with their dignity, as a free and independent nation, any longer to continue indulgencies and exemptions to any of the subjects of their enemy, who is obstinately bent upon their destruction of subjugation, have thought it proper to ordain and order, and it is hereby *Ordained and Ordered*, That henceforward general reprisals be granted against the ships, goods, and subjects of the king of Great Britain: so that, as well the fleets and ships of these United States, as also all other ships and vessels commissioned by letters of marque or general reprisals, or otherwise, by the authority of the United States in Congress assembled, shall and may lawfully seize all ships, vessels, and goods belonging to the king or crown of Britain, or to his subjects, or others inhabiting within any of the territories or possessions of the aforesaid king of Great Britain; and bring them to judgment in any of the courts of admiralty that now are or hereafter may be established in any of these United States, by the authority of the United States in Congress assembled. And the said courts of admiralty are hereby authorized and required to take cognizance of, and judicially to proceed upon, all and all manner of captures, seizures, prizes, and reprisals of all ships and goods that are or shall be taken; and to hear and determine the same; and, according to the course of admiralty and the laws of nations, to adjudge and condemn all such ships, vessels, and goods, as shall belong to the king of Great Britain, or to his subjects, or to any others inhabiting within any of the countries, territories, or dominions, or possessions of the aforesaid king of Great Britain:

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And that the board of admiralty or secretary of marine forthwith prepare, and lay before the United States in Congress assembled, a draught of instructions for such ships or vessels as shall be commissioned for the purposes above mentioned.

And it is hereby *Ordained*, That the destruction of papers, or the possession of double papers, by any captured vessel, shall be deemed and taken as just cause for the condemnation of such captured vessel; and that, when any prize, having been taken and possessed by the enemy twenty-four hours, shall be retaken from them, the whole of such re-captured prize shall be condemned, for the use of the re-captors: but, in cases where the prize shall have continued in the possession of the enemy less than twenty-four hours, it shall be restored to the original owner or owners, except one third part of the true value thereof, which shall be allowed as salvage to the re-captors.

And it is hereby farther *Ordained*, That the citizens and inhabitants of these United States be, and they hereby are strictly enjoined and required, to abstain from all intercourse, correspondence, or dealings, whatsoever, with the subjects of the said king of Great Britain, while at open war with these United States, as they will answer the same at their peril. And the executives of the several States are hereby called upon to take the most vigilant and effectual measures for detecting and suppressing such intercourse, correspondence, or dealings, and bringing the authors thereof, or those concerned therein, to condign punishment.

And, in order the more effectually to remove every colourable pretence for continuing such intercourse, it is hereby *Ordained*, That, from and after the first day of November next, no benefit shall be claimed from, nor countenance or regard paid to, any letters of passport or safe-conduct, heretofore granted by the Congress of the United States, to any of the citizens or inhabitants thereof, or to any person or persons whatever, for the removal of their property or effects from places within the dominions or possessions of the said king of Great Britain.

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Provided, always, That this ordinance shall not extend to authorise the capture or condemnation of any vessel belonging to any inhabitant of Bermudas, which, being loaded with salt only, may arrive in any of these United States, on or before the first day of May next.

And it is hereby *Ordained*, That all former acts or resolutions of Congress, contrary to the tenor, true intent, and meaning of this ordinance, be, and they are hereby repealed.

DONE, by the UNITED STATES in CONGRESS assembled, the twenty-seventh day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty one, and in the fifth year of our Independence. **SAMUEL HUNTINGTON**, President. Attest. **CHARLES THOMSON**, Secretary.